



## Survey Analysis September 2019

### Overview

Advocacy and Communication Solutions (ACS) and OK Futures used targeted partners to reach Oklahoma families to confirm impressions about persuasive messengers and messages. 107 respondents had a completion rate of 84%, and the average time spent on the survey was just over 9 minutes. Over two thirds of respondents had a child between 0-4 years. Approximately 78% of respondents were female.

### Key Findings

Below are the most significant findings from the survey respondents overall included messages, messengers and sentiments about quality that resonate with the majority of those surveyed. Answers for each question below are listed with the highest ranked/most persuasive answers first. Differences among regions are reflected in the subsequent sections of this memo.

1. Signs of Quality: When asked to assess the components of a quality early learning environment, respondents selected the following as the top signs of a quality program:
  - Developmentally appropriate curriculum that includes arts, crafts, music, dance, etc.
  - Nurturing and safe environments
  - Nutritional food offerings
  - Developing verbal, reading, and math skills to prepare children for school
  - Socialization with other children
  - Learning through play, creativity, and curiosity
  - Developing social and emotional skills like getting along with others, taking turns and problem-solving
2. Messengers: The most trusted individuals regarding information about their child's early development and learning the following were:
  - Pediatricians/health care providers
  - Preschool or pre-k teacher
  - Kindergarten teachers
  - Child care providers

3. Messages: Statements that would make a respondent more or less likely to send their child to preschool, the following statements were the most highly rated:
  - Social emotional skills
  - 90% of the brain develops before age five
  - The first 2000 days of a child’s life are most important
  - Positive messages rather than negative ones.
4. Sources of Information: The most likely places where parents seek information about early development and learning were as follows:
  - Family
  - Pediatrician or Doctors office
  - Internet sources
  - Friends and neighbors

## Results

### Signs of Quality

When asked to assess the components of a quality early learning environment on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most important, respondents saw most of the choices as being important signs of quality. They selected the following as the top signs of a quality program:

- Developmentally appropriate curriculum that includes arts, crafts, music, dance, etc. (3.30)
- Nurturing and safe environments (3.27)
- Nutritional food offerings (3.25)
- Developing verbal, reading, and math skills to prepare children for school (3.21)
- Socialization with other children (3.20)
- Learning through play, creativity, and curiosity (3.19)
- Developing social and emotional skills like getting along with others, taking turns and problem-solving (3.19)

The lowest ranked answers were low staff turnover (2.86) and food flexibility-ability to bring your own food (2.51). Interestingly, approximately 10% of respondents answered “Don’t know” to each of the choices.

### Messengers

When asked how much they trusted certain messengers on a child’s early development and learning, pediatricians/health care provider were the most trusted, with 89% of respondents indicated they had some, or a great deal of trust in them, and 64% indicating they had a great deal of trust. Respondents indicated they had also trusted those who regularly interacted with their children. Kindergarten teachers, preschool or pre-k teacher, and child care providers also ranked high, with 83%, 84%, and 83% of respondents indicating they had some or a great deal of trust in each category respectively. Business officials and elected officials were the least trusted of all the listed messengers-over 40% of respondents had no trust or not much trust in both of those categories.

## Messages

When it came to impactful messages and statements that would make a respondent more or less likely to send their child to preschool, the following statements were the most highly rated as being more likely:

- Develops social and emotional skills - Research shows that quality early experiences with parents or a trusted caregiver help children with problem solving, confidence, learning to get along with others, and handling emotions.
- The first 2000 days of a child's life are most important – There are 2,000 days before kindergarten, and your most important job as a parent is to make each of those days count.
- 90% of the brain develops before age five - High quality early childhood education makes the best of those early years to ensure they are ready for school.
- Establishes a good foundation for life - Research shows that high quality early childhood education ensures kids are ready for school, better behaved, and get along better with other children in school.

The following messages were the least persuasive to respondents:

- Falling behind - High quality early education makes it less likely a child will repeat a grade or need special education.
- Long-term benefits - Children who receive high quality early education are less likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system, less likely to commit crimes, and less likely to use social services.

## Sources of Information

When asked about sources of information, respondents overwhelmingly cited family (84%) and doctor's offices (77%) as places where they seek information about their child's health, well-being, and early education. About half of respondents also used websites to access information. Only 33% of respondents cited state and local agencies as sources of information they seek, and even fewer cited social media (18%) as a source. The lowest ranked source of information was television (8%).

## Brain Development

Over 76% of respondents believe that the time from birth to age 5 is the most important for a child's brain development. 13% of respondents believed all ages were equally important.

## **Regional Distinctions**

For this analysis, ACS used the same regions as used in the Urban Institute. There was one respondent from the Tulsa region, so ACS did not do a separate analysis for that region. The number of respondents in other regions are as follows:

- Western Counties Region: 14
- Oklahoma City region: 20
- Southern Counties Region: 29
- Eastern Counties Region: 38

Most responses aligned with the overall trends, below are the areas where specific regions had answers distinct from the full set.

#### Oklahoma City Region

- When choosing what indicates a quality early learning environment, the top two choices were:
  - Family involvement and communication
  - a nurturing and safe environment
- This region also found the following message persuasive:
  - Establishes a good foundation for life - Research shows that high quality early childhood education ensures kids are ready for school, better behaved, and get along better with other children in school.

#### Western Counties Region

- In general, all the choices about signs of quality in a program were ranked higher than in the full set of respondents.
- The two highest rated signs of quality were:
  - Nutritional food offerings
  - food flexibility
- The second highest rated signs of quality were:
  - Rest time
  - Developing verbal, reading, and math skills to prepare children for school
- Trusted messengers included:
  - Researchers and academia
  - Parents of young children
- Child care resource and referral agencies were also ranked very high as sources of information regarding their child's health, well-being and early education.
- The following messages were the highest ranked as being persuasive:
  - 90% of the brain develops before age five - High quality early childhood education makes the best of those early years to ensure they are ready for school.

- Future workforce - When our community invests in high quality early childhood education, we save money in the long run by investing in our future workers by building their skills from an early age.
- Develops social and emotional skills - Research shows that quality early experiences with parents or a trusted caregiver help children with problem solving, confidence, learning to get along with others, and handling emotions.

#### Southern Counties Region

- Unique highly ranked sources of information in this region were:
  - Developing social and emotional skills like getting along with others, taking turns and problem-solving,
  - Caregiver/child ratio,
  - Staff that has specific preparation and skills in child development to promote school readiness.
  
- Half the respondents in this region cited state or local agencies as good sources of information on their child's health, well-being and early education.

#### Eastern Counties Region

- Developing social and emotional skills like getting along with others, taking turns, and problem solving was the second highest ranked sign of a quality early childhood program.
  
- Head Start/Early Head Start Teachers were highly ranked as a source of information for families.
  
- In general, this region was more neutral on messages about the importance of early childhood education than other regions.